

# An Examination of Thomas Hurka's Virtue Consequentialism

by

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine three separate issues pertaining to Thomas Hurka's virtue consequentialism. Hurka's account describes virtue as a positive orientation towards a good, and a vice as a negative orientation towards a good. The three goods that Hurka assigns to his theory are: pleasure, achievement, and knowledge. In my first paper I argue that an indirect approach to virtue development is more effective than a direct approach. I propose that an individual will have an easier time becoming virtuous if he works on cultivating his empathy, and being guided by a rational commitment to promoting the goods, rather than depending strictly on his willpower, and a rational commitment to promoting the goods. In the second paper I criticize Hurka's definition of humility, and argue for my own account. Hurka characterizes humility as an asymmetrical recognition of goods. We might inflate the goods of others even though they are equal to our own, or we might deflate our own compared to the equal goods of others. I argue that this conflicts with his theory of virtue, and does not capture what is valuable about humility. I provide my own account of humility as a skill utilized by mentors. The third paper argues that Hurka's account of virtue does not accurately describe intrinsic value, and therefore would be rejected by virtue ethicists. His account is committed to describing the intrinsic value of virtue as part of a conditional organic unity. I argue that this is different from the intrinsic value argued for by traditional virtue ethicists.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to Johnnie Rose, whose compassion has had a profound impact on my life.

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## Indirect Consequentialism and Empathy

Indirect consequentialism has been discussed in order to solve certain problems plaguing consequentialism such as the problem of justice or alienation. In this paper, I will argue that indirect consequentialism produces virtues in Thomas Hurka's theory of virtue consequentialism better than direct consequentialism. In so doing the paper will also provide a more specific approach to developing virtues than Hurka provides. I will argue this by first explicating the theory of virtue, then presenting evidence from recent psychology that lends support to the idea that the indirect approach to virtue will be successful. Next I will describe what I take to be a direct approach to virtue development in virtue consequentialism. Lastly, I will present reasons why the indirect approach fares better than the direct approach for virtue development.

### Hurka's Virtue

In this section I will present Hurka's definition of virtue, as well as his characterization of its development. Hurka's account of virtue is explored in his text *Virtue, Vice, and Value*.<sup>1</sup> In it he defends consequentialism, and gives virtue a place among valuable attitudes or mental orientations. Virtues for Hurka are positive orientations towards goods in the form of attitudes. The primary goods in Hurka's theory are: knowledge, pleasure, and achievement. Any positive attitude toward these goods in one's self or in others is considered a virtue. This system of goods and responses forms a hierarchy in Hurka's theory. The list of primary goods is those which should be promoted and maximized, and the responses to these goods are a secondary level of value because they only exist in response to the primary goods, but are not the primary goods themselves. The fact that they are not themselves base-level or foundational goods does not detract from their overall importance. People who have these virtues are doing something

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, And Value* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001).

praiseworthy and good. A few examples will help me illustrate this. A teacher who spends her life expressing joy at her students' achievements in her classes is often visited by past students who can report what an important impact her attitude and encouragement has had on them. Still others may stop and reflect in a moment of mentorship that she helped them achieve a level of compassion by being such a great mentor herself. Still others may not even be cognizant of the way that the attitude helped shape them, but display a greater confidence as a result. The ripples of such an educator's attitudes can go on and on, even through generations. And this certainly doesn't exhaust the impact that has been made on the lives of those she has influenced. To express joy toward one child's achievements could change the trajectory of her life, and to consistently approach others with this compassionate attitude towards achievement can result in tremendous results in the lives of others. It serves as a tremendous source of encouragement. It is not hard to trace back in our own lives times when we have found an attitude in another that has lifted us out of discouragement or made us feel inspired to reach our goals. Not only does this type of example point out the value of such attitudes in terms of encouragement towards others, but also shines a light on the value of the life lived by the teacher. Her strength of character not only aids others, but also shows an enduring commitment over time that takes years to build up and cement into a disposition. The attitudes point to a life well-lived in terms of strength and cultivation of one's best qualities.

Hurka's robust theory of virtue also addresses all sorts of other issues such as the intensity of attitudes that we are to have toward certain goods, as well as the right distribution of attitudes towards multiple goods in order to address the complex contexts that individuals find themselves in. For example, if I learn that my best friend has just successfully defended her dissertation, then I should have an intense positive feeling towards her achievement because of



its level of sophistication and time investment. If I then also hear about my niece doing well on her weekly math quiz, then I should have a much less intense positive attitude towards her achievement because it was much less complex and time consuming. Virtues put us in very close contact with not only our own achievements and goals, but also the achievements and goals of those around us. We are to tune into those around us, and when we respond with joy at their achievements we are being virtuous. Because virtue is defined as an attitudinal response to a good some philosophers have dubbed it the Appropriate Response View.<sup>2</sup> Hurka has spent tremendous time and energy toward working out the details of this theory.

Despite his robust approach to the development of this theory, Hurka has only a few references to the development of virtue.<sup>3</sup> He mentions that friendships and other relationships strengthen virtues.<sup>4</sup> There is also a brief mention of the importance of moral education for children in helping them develop virtue.<sup>5</sup> The most extensive mention of virtue development is in reference to how a person's love for the goods can develop over time.

One possibility is that she first loves a good only emotionally, and then from repeated exposure to it comes to appreciate it as good and to love it for that reason. This is an Aristotelian model of the development of virtue, starting from non-rational attitudes, either innate or trained, and intellectualizing them. Alternatively, she can first love a good only as a good and then develop an emotional attachment to it; this is an anti-Aristotelian model. Given their identical endpoints, these processes can be equally morally desirable. What matters is that each results in

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<sup>2</sup> Brian McElwee, "The Value of the Virtues," *Utilitas* 27, no. 1 (2015): 64.

<sup>3</sup> Hurka does mention that his focus is on how to correctly classify occurrent attitudes as opposed to the process of getting a person to have these attitudes. His commitment to classifying occurrent attitudes that have a background in a disposition as equally valuable as those that emerge spontaneously also contributes to his disinterest in the project of virtue development.

<sup>4</sup> Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

the overall attitude to a good that is best, combining love for it as good and from simple emotion, and in roughly equal proportion.<sup>6</sup>

We can glean quite a bit from just this statement. We can see that there is a natural progression of love towards others having goods. We can recognize in our own lives many examples of intensifying love towards others and what is happening in their lives. We want our children to have opportunities that we didn't have, we want our aging parents to be well cared for and happy, and we support our spouses and friends because our bonds to them grow naturally. Each of these references gives insight to the process of becoming virtuous on Hurka's account, but all together they do not comprise enough of a strategy to be used to help one become better. One byproduct of my examination of indirect consequentialism is that it produces a more robust explanation for developing virtues than Hurka provides.

#### Indirect Approach

There seem to be two different ways to approach the development of these virtues. Indirect consequentialism is one such way, and I will now explain what this process would look like. Peter Railton has pointed out in his article, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality,"<sup>7</sup> that the goods of consequentialism can be promoted not by pursuing them directly, but by pursuing and developing other qualities. This was a giant leap forward in the understanding of sophisticated consequentialism, and provided a solution to the difficulty that pursuing the goods of consequentialism directly will lead a moral agent to alienation from others. An indirect approach to virtue development for Hurka's theory would mean emphasizing or cultivating something other than the direct response to the achievement recognized. While I

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13, no. 2 (1984).

will speak about the direct approach in more detail later on, I take it that a direct approach would involve a kind of mental triggering or a conscious reminder to be responding to another person. The indirect approach would mean focusing on something other than that direct, conscious trigger to have the right responses to achievements and other goods. To elucidate the indirect approach, I would like to focus on the cultivation of empathy, and show how focusing on that capacity allows us to become virtuous in the way that Hurka describes. I must first answer the question of how empathy and increasing its capacity will allow us to become virtuous.

Though the term is still not completely fleshed out empathy is characterized as the ability to feel what other people are feeling at any given time. Psychologist Martin Hoffman refers to empathy as, “an affective response more appropriate to another’s situation than one’s own.”<sup>8</sup> Contemporary philosophy has debated empathy in dialogues from philosophy of mind to aesthetics. The most relevant philosophical discussion of empathy to virtue development is the dialogue dealing with moral psychology. Philosophers are examining the ways in which psychology can explain moral motivation from a scientific perspective. Empathy plays a role in this project because its cultivation allows us to become more virtuous. In explaining how it does so I want to begin by making an assumption about human nature. It is commonplace and typical for people to take pride in their achievements, and feel sadness at their failures. If the virtues we are concerned about involve responding with pleasure at the achievements of others and sadness at their failures, then emphasizing and cultivating empathy with others should provide us with a pretty close match for Hurka’s virtues. We can respond in the ways that Hurka wants us to by tuning into the feelings of others and how they feel about their lives with our empathic abilities. I take empathy to be feeling in ourselves what another person feels about things like her

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

achievements and failures. For example, being in a cohort of ten other doctorate students and watching them graduate I'm in a good position to observe how proud and happy they each feel about the accomplishment of their doctorates. If I really tune into my fellow grad students, then I take joy at their accomplishments as well, because I feel what they feel. The cultivation of my empathic abilities allows me to become virtuous, and override the sadness of being the last one of my class to graduate.

Two concerns immediately present themselves when thinking this way about empathy. First, not everyone is hardwired to feel joy at their accomplishments. Some people fall victim to comparisons, and feel sad that they didn't graduate when their friends did, or that they didn't get honors, so they shouldn't be happy for their accomplishments. They experience exactly the opposite of what Hurka wants in a virtuous person responding to her own accomplishments. If we were to tune in to her feelings about her accomplishments, then we would end up being vicious. I will respond to this concern more fully later on, but for now I can address it by saying that it is not empathy alone that is responsible for making us virtuous all by itself. It plays a key role in helping us be virtuous, but it is certainly not the entire story, so this kind of concern can be avoided by looking at the more extensive picture of empathy's role in virtue. Secondly, some philosophers worry about having an affective match between the person feeling happy about her accomplishment and the person who is also happy about her accomplishment. This concern can be accommodated by referring back to Hoffman's definition of empathy. He characterizes it as being more appropriate to someone else rather than ourselves. By adhering to this definition, we can see that having a perfect affective match is not what is required. All that is required of us to be virtuous is to have a positive orientation toward the achievements of others, but it is not

necessary to have the same affective state as the person who is also happy about her achievement.

With the preliminary concerns out of the way I will now present a more in-depth view of empathy in relation to how it will help us to tune into the lives of others to become virtuous. I will be adhering to Hoffman's research as a scientifically based and established theory. A person who is able to experience empathy has had a long task throughout his/her life of developing this ability. Hoffman describes the various mechanisms that make empathy possible, delineates the stages which an individual passes through in order to develop her empathy, the role of socialization for empathy's development, and the prospect of the addition of an acceptance of moral principles to reinforce and support empathy's continuation and development in adults. I will give a brief overview of Hoffman's findings as to the development of empathy, and then relate it to Hurka's virtues.

Hoffman finds that being able to feel what is more appropriate to another than to oneself appears in five mechanisms or methods of 'empathic arousal'. Three of these mechanisms only use minimal cognition, and appear to be involuntary. They are mimicry: the imitation of one infant crying when he hears another child cry; classical conditioning: the association of certain emotional expressions or other cues that we learn to associate with the feelings of another; and direct association, where we respond to someone who is in distress by recalling how we felt in a similar situation and respond accordingly.<sup>9</sup> I mention these early stages of empathic development for two reasons. First, to point out that the ability to cultivate empathy is innate, and so the process of becoming virtuous is already naturally present within us, and should be triggered automatically in us. Second, one might initially ask how reliable empathy is, and how much we

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 36.

can depend upon it in allowing us to become virtuous. It would not be very helpful if it were only found in some people, and were an occasional feeling at best. By presenting its early stages we see that empathy should be a reliable way of tuning into the feelings of others because it is multi-determined. Empathy starts at a very young age, and has multiple ways of manifesting itself, so empathy is a stable, reliable state that we can depend upon to be steady in our lives.

Another important point about empathy is that it is something that we can work to cultivate and amplify in our own lives. Not all of us are the most empathic people we could be, and maybe haven't worked very hard to tune in to others and feel what they feel. Hoffman provides evidence that empathy is the type of faculty that can be cultivated and enhanced. This is an important facet of empathy because it shows that we can become more virtuous if we do not already possess tremendous empathy. There is no charge of elitism in the connection between empathy and virtue. We can all be working on cultivating empathy if we find ourselves isolated, self-absorbed, and not thinking of others. Hoffman's evidence that we can increase our empathic abilities is found in socialization. In addition to the different empathy mechanisms and the stages of development, Hoffman also discusses the importance of socialization in empathy's development. Socialization is characterized by Hoffman as an individual being made aware of the feelings of others that he may have missed at first.<sup>10</sup> A child may knock down another in his pursuit of his pet puppy, or an adult may not be aware of a friend's feeling of loneliness as she is about to move away. In these cases, we miss the chance to empathize, and it is important that we be informed in order to empathize and meet the other person where she is. In children, Hoffman explains, this process is one of developing 'scripts' or connections between being informed of one's ignorance of the other's feelings and an associated feeling of guilt over having ignored the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 137.

other.<sup>11</sup> Eventually these associations precipitate behavior patterns or dispositions to feel bad when we overlook the feelings of others, and may even push us to try harder in the future to be more aware of the feelings of others. This process may contribute to the understanding and empathizing that mature adults experience when they perceive the feelings of others. When we realize that our friends will miss us greatly even though we are leaving town for a great job, this empathizing may be due to the conditioning and scripting that we performed as children. Whatever process is responsible, socialization plays a key role in the development of our empathy, which is why I believe that it deserves mention at this juncture. Though the capacity to empathize is natural, the process of empathizing is not one that happens strictly naturally if humans are in isolation, and without interactions with others.

To place these findings about human empathic development into the context of Hurka's virtue consequentialism, our natural propensities to empathize with others are strengthened through the socialization we receive in childhood as well as in adulthood. We can be helped as children to respond to the pain of others with unhappiness, and the pleasure of achievement with pleasure by forming these associations through good parenting. Similarly, socialization in adulthood also helps us to strengthen our empathic abilities because we are better able to approach the situations of others with maturity, while continuing to cultivate our empathy. Another important feature of empathy that is useful in helping us develop virtue concerns the more sophisticated methods of empathy. In Hurka's theory of virtues we are not only confronted by simple situations where we need only respond to one achievement from one person at a time, but also with complex situations where we are required to assess really sophisticated situations involving multiple components and agents. We are also asked to be able to feel the right intensity

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 159.

of happiness or pleasure at the level of difficulty of achievement. Hoffman's description of the later stages of empathic development show us that it allows us to cultivate the kind of sophisticated empathy that allows us to respond to complex situations. The latter two stages, which also represent advancement into more mature cognition, are: mediated association, where we respond empathetically to the pain of another by 'digesting' or comprehending their situation; and role-taking, where we imagine what it would be like to be in the situation of the other person in order to respond to the pain of another.<sup>12</sup> As we transition from childhood to adulthood our empathic abilities increase and gain new dimensions. We gain a richer understanding of not only the current situations of others, but also of their life conditions as well.<sup>13</sup> This means that we are able to empathize with a person who is terminally ill, but remains cheerful and desires only to discuss his career or mundane topics when we visit him. We feel sympathy for his overall life condition, but are also able to understand his current cheerfulness. In a sense, we become able to take a step away from the person's current emotions and take stock of his life as a whole. Examples like this one show just how sophisticated our empathic abilities can become in adulthood. All of these function together to give a person a multifaceted, coupled system of mechanisms that reinforce each other, allowing a person to feel empathy in many different situations as well as to many different degrees.<sup>14</sup>

This overview of empathy's development and scope is useful in helping to fill in the explanation for Hurka's virtue development. Good parenting, patient friends, and our own natural abilities will allow us to become to a very great extent virtuous. We develop naturally the propensity to feel pain from the pain of others, and can be helped by those around us to develop

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 49-58.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 61.



beyond simply our own capabilities. So it appears that when Hurka says that we may start by loving the pleasure of another naturally and then come to love it rationally or vice versa it appears that his bald intuitions take us partway toward the truth about virtue development, and actually coincide with credible psychological data on empathy. Our natural propensities for empathy development allow us to meet others where they are in their achievements and failures, thus matching up with Hurka's responses and allowing us to be virtuous. A cursory understanding of empathy's natural development is also valuable in understanding how to extend our natural capacities beyond what they give us naturally. This natural development is not the whole story of how we become virtuous, and more needs to be said about how to extend our natural capacities, but it is valuable to be aware of our empathic development because it builds a foundation of what is available to us as philosophers to stimulate or extend in order to become more virtuous.

One final note about empathy's role in virtue consequentialism needs to be addressed before the direct view is examined. It is clear that empathy and its cultivation cannot completely account for virtue development. If we only focus on our empathic abilities alone we would probably end up tuning into others without discrimination about whether or not they should feel as they do about things such as accomplishments and failures. Empathy alone will not align our affective states with Hurka's virtues. We end up tuning in to the friend who exaggerates the failure of doing poorly on an exam, or aligning our feelings with someone we meet at a conference who is particularly full of himself about his recent article publication. Tuning in to others in order to better align ourselves with the appropriate feelings and intensities does not appear to be enough. I have two additional considerations to address this particular concern. First, it is not clear what all is being accomplished by the more sophisticated empathic

development. It might be the case that as our empathy matures our overall perspective of what is appropriate regarding affective responses matures with it, and we are not just awash in a sea of people feeling different ways about their accomplishments and failures. Evidence that this is the case is that we see therapists and social workers who are able to maintain their professional perspectives of helping without succumbing to the pure empathy of their patients. There does seem to be some maturing in our perspectives as our empathy matures as well. Second, it is not unprecedented that indirect consequentialism has some feature that helps an individual keep tabs on whether or not she is hitting the mark with her indirect approach. This sort of background maintenance is explicitly addressed in Railton's article. We can be focusing on something indirectly related to the positive outcomes that consequentialism asks of us, but we must also do periodic check-ins to make sure that our approach is indeed hitting the consequentialist mark. In order to address the idea that empathy is not enough it seems that a useful addition to the cultivation of empathy is the general acceptance of Hurka's structure of virtues, and periodic check-ins to make sure that our empathy is indeed helping us be virtuous. Without this additional fixture in the process we could end up surrounded by vicious people, and be vicious ourselves with only empathy to guide us. Checking our empathic responses against Hurka's set of virtues from time to time can help us more accurately stay on the mark of being virtuous. It can signify to us when we have empathized with someone who is depressed, or overly proud of their achievements. This type of mental check-in can help direct our characters in a way that the empathy alone cannot.

Direct Approach

In this section I will explore what I take to be the direct approach to virtue development for Hurka's virtue consequentialism. Though this process is vague because the direct development of virtues is open to interpretation, what I have done is to present the best possible interpretation of virtue development that addresses the virtues directly instead of employing an indirect strategy such as that of empathic development. I have not found a robust picture of direct virtue development in consequentialism, so what I present is built off of my own intuitions in the absence of other accounts to build on. What would a direct approach to virtue development look like for this theory? It's my interpretation that a direct approach to developing these virtues would mean working only with the rational acceptance of the importance of being virtuous, triggering an attitudinal response when confronted with a primary good, and assessing whether one was successfully virtuous. The important difference that I am after is that this process would avoid any external cultivation outside of just the virtuous responses themselves that are triggered naturally, or through our reminders to ourselves to have the right attitudes towards these goods presented to us. Though there may be other indirect influences on this process, such as the maturing of empathy naturally from the early stages to the latter or other processes, nothing beyond the natural, uncultivated capacity is allowed in this direct process. In this process a person would accept the importance of the virtues, and go about becoming virtuous by responding appropriately naturally, and then responding rationally and intentionally when they are aware that they have strayed from being virtuous. For example, upon hearing that a friend will be defending her dissertation I may immediately feel disdain for her because I'm a particularly jealous person. I wanted to defend my dissertation first, and the thought that she is going to succeed before me brings nothing but gall to my affective states. In this situation I can recognize that my response is vicious, and that I should be happy for her, so I rationally correct

my error in the moment, and remind myself that I need to be happy for her accomplishment in order to be virtuous. Hopefully this reminder will help me attach a positive affective mental state to her accomplishment, and over time I can build up a habit of catching myself and responding accordingly.

It is important to give as clear a picture as possible as to what the direct approach is, and how it works. The direct approach to virtue means rationally adhering to the importance of responding to goods appropriately as being ethical and virtuous. This part of the process strikes me as either happening naturally, or being based in our reason. We know what we should be doing, and we accept that we will act accordingly. When confronted with the news that my sister has gotten a promotion at work I recognize that I should be happy for her. After hearing the news I will have an affective response that I can then analyze. Because of my natural make-up and good parenting it might be that I automatically respond positively towards her achievement. If I tend towards the vice of jealousy or have anxiety about my own future I may instead find myself feeling sour towards her. I can then analyze this emotion, and compare it to the virtues to see if I have responded virtuously. If I have been happy for her, then I can count myself as having been virtuous in that situation. If I recognize that I have been vicious I can then attempt to alter how I feel in order to be virtuous. In order to ‘trigger’ our positive attitudes, if they don’t occur naturally, we may remind ourselves of how we feel when we achieve something of equal importance, and then map it onto the achievement we have recognized. In the above dissertation example I could do an assessment of my friend’s achievement, and my own response, recognizing rationally that my jealousy matches the affective response of a vice. In order to correct for that I could think about what it must feel like to defend a dissertation, and attach that affect to my friend’s achievement in order to have the virtuous attitude and override the

roadblock of vice. Through a process of self-analysis we can directly confront our vices and how to correct them as well as rewarding our virtues. Over time this process may allow us to override our vices through habit and past recognition of virtuous attitudes.

There are specific differences that can be pointed out between the direct view and the indirect view. One important difference that I see between the two views is that in the direct view one is intending to maximize the number of occurrent, virtuous attitudes towards goods, whereas in the indirect view one is intending to empathically tune in to others in a compassionate way and is thereby virtuous making corrections when necessary. The key differences between the views are: the intentions of the person, and the focus of the attitudes. In the direct view one is attempting to respond directly to the achievements or goods themselves, whereas in the indirect view one is focused on the person who is achieving the goods as well as the goods themselves.

One concern that arises in examining this approach is whether or not this kind of habituation would also bring with it increased empathy. The research being done on the increase of empathy does suggest that repeated action will form habituation, but it is not clear that just the rational reminder and the change of attitude is enough to cultivate empathy. The research on cultivating empathy in adults suggests that it is the right kind of socialization that cultivates empathy, so it doesn't look as though repeated adjusting of attitudes is enough to accomplish the cultivation and increase of the empathic abilities. This keeps the indirect approach from collapsing into the direct approach, and helps carve out a distinction between the two even though the details of the direct approach are murky.

The details may remain a bit unclear, but I have stipulated what I take to be a direct approach to virtue development for Hurka's consequentialism. In it the moral agent attempts to directly bring about the right occurrent attitudes at the time, and may develop this as a habit over

time. In the next section I will contrast the two approaches arguing that the indirect approach fares better than the direct approach.

### Benefits of Indirect Approach

In this section I will lay out why the indirect approach to virtue development fares better than the direct approach. They include ways in which the indirect approach solves certain difficulties for consequentialism, and ways in which it simply allows people to be virtuous better than the direct approach.

The first attraction of the indirect approach is the answer that it gives to the perennial charge leveled against consequentialism that it is inhumanly cold and calculating. The worry persists into contemporary philosophy that consequentialism requires individuals to be cold and calculating in order to be choosing the right actions that promote goods. The version of indirect consequentialism that I have discussed as well as others such as rule utilitarianism and Railton's indirect consequentialism answer this concern by showing that individuals do perfectly well promoting goods by focusing on approaches to consequentialism that are not in-the-moment, cold calculations of utility. People are instead focusing on cultivating a mental ability that brings us closer to other individuals, and in the process allows us to have a very good record of having the right affective states to show that we are virtuous. It is hard to argue that working towards greater empathy is somehow cold and calculating. Individuals most likely to be seen cultivating empathy are teachers, therapists, and social workers. Their lives are clearly not built around crunching utility numbers in order to get a positive result.

Another attraction of this indirect approach is that it answers our concerns about motivation. When examining Hurka's virtue structure it becomes apparent that this theory is quite demanding of us. We are asked to be not only promoting the primary goods, but also

responding positively or negatively based on which goods are accomplished and in what degree. We're to be doing this as much as we can. By all outward appearances this is a maximizing theory of consequentialism, not a satisficing one. That means that our job as virtuous agents is ongoing and rigorous. With this demand on our abilities it is easy to see that there is a concern about individuals continuing to be motivated to be virtuous. My particular concern here is that we simply tire from a task that we accept as being important rationally, but that doesn't necessarily provide us with much benefit in return, and is quite tedious. The connection that we get to other people with our increase in empathy is highly rewarding. Whereas simply keeping in mind that it is the right thing to do to keep determining the best way to be virtuous on a case-by-case basis is tiring because it doesn't present us with a clear reward that would help us to keep acting this way. It might be great to know that we are doing the right thing, but that pales in comparison to the joy we feel when we achieve a closer bond with others in cultivating empathy. It's also quite a tedious task if we consider how many people we come into contact with, each deserving an appropriate response. Our mental cache can quickly fill, and overwhelm us resulting in us abandoning the task of virtue all together because we feel so overwhelmed by what is required of us.

When we compare the direct approach with the indirect one the indirect approach is better able to accommodate the motivation concern. On the direct approach, we rely upon our willpower and habituation in order to continue being virtuous even when we are tired or self-absorbed. It seems a bit flimsy that we would constantly keep up the motivation to be virtuous from our own willpower. Returning to my above example where my friend is defending her dissertation before me it is taxing to stop my negative feelings in their tracks, and then try to map on the appropriate feeling. On a very base level we would rather be soothed ourselves about our

own feelings of inadequacy instead of taking on a new mental task that will be against our own feelings. Putting forth that effort may also look as though it is without merit beyond being a good person. Such good Samaritanism is a difficult task to perform repeatedly when we neither get to indulge in our natural tendency towards jealousy, nor reap any benefit from doing this. On the indirect approach, however, we are not simply relying on our willpower, but rather on a faculty that is not only multi-determined, but that has been strengthened through cultivation of our empathic abilities. It has a long evolutionary history, and has a place in our early childhood before we even knew what willpower meant. What all of this adds up to is that our empathy does not require our willpower to sustain itself. When we get tired of drumming ourselves up to tune in to others it can continue even without our constant mental stoking. It also offers the benefit of feeling deeply connected and bonded to those that we empathize with as opposed to just reacting to achievements. The empathic bond that we can mutually form with others offers us a deep feeling of belonging and gives us a purpose on an emotional as well as rational level. Shared empathy can result in strong friendships or close bonds with family or even the students we teach and tutor. The mutual empathic bond is a strong and multi-determined natural impulse that can help bolster our attempts at being virtuous.

Another benefit the indirect view provides for people is that it also allows them to be more reliably virtuous. We are able to sustain this empathic ability better than we are able to remind ourselves that we must be virtuous, and this results in us producing the right affective states more often than if we rely on our willpower and habit alone. Over time the direct view exposes that we are not as reliably virtuous. This coupled with the already taxing, thankless task would wear us down, and probably lead us to abandon our commitment to being virtuous.



One final benefit concerns one's effectiveness at promoting the primary goods under the indirect view. Focusing on the person instead of just the achievement may promote the primary goods better than the direct view making it more effective overall. Under the direct view, we would be struggling to keep the mental cache clear enough to keep up with producing the correct occurrent attitudes towards goods. Under the indirect view, we are bonding with others in a meaningful way as we cultivate our empathy. This approach to virtue allows for more mental freedom from tediousness, and the feeling of connectedness may even serve as encouragement for me to be more giving and pursue my interests. I'm not bogged down in trying to respond in the right ways, so not only do I have more mental energy to devote to promoting the primary goods, but I also have more motivation to do so because empathetically bonding with others can bolster my own desire to achieve more. If I feel the bond with friends and loved ones, then I am much more motivated to pursue projects and make commitments.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to give a perspective on the best way to go about becoming virtuous for Hurka's standards of consequentialism. Though the differences between the indirect and direct views have not been fully fleshed out it still appears that we know enough to see that an indirect approach will still fare better than a direct approach to becoming virtuous.

Though it was not the purpose of this paper, the argument made lends itself as a foundational step toward building the connection between prosocial attitudes and prosocial behavior. A further project could be to see how far the scope of these attitudes should go, and the connection between the attitudes and prosocial behaviors. This project has been pursued by philosophers such as C. Daniel Batson, who have found evidence that altruism exists between

individuals even without benefiting the individual.<sup>15</sup> Research into the connection between the prosocial attitudes, and prosocial behavior such as altruism has tremendous value in explaining the prosocial attitudes described by the classical utilitarians such as Bentham and Mill. In *Utilitarianism* Mill states that community itself will increase fellow feelings, which will have a positive impact towards promoting the goods of utilitarianism.<sup>16</sup> The philosophers of these time periods predated modern psychology, so advances in research toward prosocial attitudes and prosocial behavior can go a long way in providing credibility to these robust theories of social unity. Each philosopher sees necessary connections between individuals as necessary for people to come together as a community who will act collectively for their good. These advances in psychology point to an optimistic body of evidence that these philosophers were indeed onto something important, and that it is plausible to see prosocial behavior in groups of individuals. Seeing that something like empathy could be helping us become better individuals is part of a very important dialogue for philosophers.

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<sup>15</sup> C.D. Batson, "Prosocial Motivation: Is It Ever Truly Altruistic," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 20 (1987): 65-122.

<sup>16</sup> J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*. (New York: Oxford, 2008), 165.

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## A Positive Account of Humility for Consequentialism

### Introduction: The Landscape of the Humility Dialogue

The philosophical community is divided on the status of humility as a virtue, (St. Augustine, Aquinas, Martin Luther, Robert Bolton, Richard Middleton) or a vice (Nietzsche, Hume, Spinoza). Humility being defended as a virtue has a long history, playing a prominent role in both eastern religions (Buddhism, Hinduism) and western religions (Christianity, Judaism). In western religious texts humility is argued to be valuable as a way of avoiding the sin of pride or vanity.<sup>17</sup> Passages from the books of Psalms and Job represent the proper attitude to avoid the sin of pride. Elsewhere Christian writers emphasized humility as the appropriate inward attitude to have towards one's creator: reverence and obedience are examples of such humility.<sup>18</sup> Martin Luther addresses this proper attitude as one that recognizes the weakness of human beings without the grace of God, without which we could not be saved.<sup>19</sup> St. Augustine describes humility as a low estimation of one's self in comparison to his creator that points out the importance of grace and divine love.<sup>20</sup>

Arguments in favor of humility as virtuous can also be found outside of the religious philosophy dialogue. The humble must overcome the vain desires to promote their own achievements. A humble person will praise the achievements of others while not insisting on praise for his own. This focus on the goods of others is a fertile field for an evaluation of attitudes connected with humility. It could be argued that to praise a fellow recipient of an award and gracefully decline outward praise in return depicts an important action and set of attitudes. In

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Button, "'A Monkish Kind of Virtue'? For and against Humility," *Political Theory* 33, no.6 (Dec., 2005): 842.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 843.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 843.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 843.

this case, to put one's own feelings toward achievement aside to praise someone else's shows compassion and empathy toward other people.

This mix of attitudes and actions connected with humility is interesting when we consider the overall aims of ethics. It is a commonplace intuition in the field of ethics that we should be concerned about the interests and achievements of others. J.S. Mill supported the idea that the greater interest we take in each other's goals and interests, the greater we are able to see their interests as just as important as our own, thereby promoting the connection between individuals and the ease of thinking about the happiness of the group instead of one's self.<sup>21</sup> Humility may not require this deep investment in the lives of others, but it seems that humility paves the way for us to cultivate compassion for others as well as other qualities that could be argued as valuable. It is this connection between the love of others' achievements and the diminishment of our own that is of particular interest.

I want to make mention of some of the projects that have attempted to characterize humility's value specifically in consequentialism. Mark Button argues for humility being a virtue in a democratic society by pointing out how it provides an openness and consciousness of others that will be required for accepting changing political climates: "We need to attend to the virtue of humility because democratic politics today requires a degree of attentiveness to multiple forms of difference and an acceptance of contingency and mutability that humility, properly configured, helps make possible."<sup>22</sup> Ann Bradshaw argues that humility is crucial to the aims of care-giving: "Above all, the good nurse needs the virtues of compassion, dedication and self-discipline as well as the humility that engenders sacrificial service... These virtues are the

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<sup>21</sup> J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 159-160.

<sup>22</sup> Button, "For and against Humility," 841.

dispositions which enable the person to become a good nurse.”<sup>23</sup> Kevin J. Shanahan and Michael R. Hyman show the importance of humility as a marker of openness about the needs of others in maintaining a harmonious workplace.<sup>24</sup> One of the most robust accounts of consequentialism that attempts to characterize humility as valuable is Thomas Hurka’s virtue consequentialism. Hurka sees humility as having a specific mix of attitudes towards goods. In one instance the humble mistakenly or intentionally see their own accomplishments as lesser than they actually are, resulting in an inflation of the goods of others. The value that Hurka sees in humility is not in its instrumental value toward promoting goods, but in the attitude itself. This attitude as a virtue is valuable in Hurka’s theory.

One difficulty within the humility dialogue is the problem with defining it. Though all of these sources use the same word to point out a valuable trait or attitude, there is contention concerning the appropriate description of humility. Often cited is the OED definition of humility in which it is associated with low self-esteem, or having a low opinion of oneself. Indeed, Aristotle saw humility as a vice because it involved having a false perception of one’s worth, and argued that this should be avoided.<sup>25</sup> It would be difficult to see how low self-esteem could be considered a virtue, and this has resulted in many philosophers labeling humility as a vice. And in the religious context, humility seems to point out an appropriate relationship between creator and creation, making low estimation of self appropriate, but in secular paradigms this only seems like a vice. Without a deity to be penitent toward, there is no reason for a low estimation of self.

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<sup>23</sup> Ann Bradshaw, “The Virtue of Nursing: The Covenant of Care,” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 25, no. 6 (Dec., 1999): 479.

<sup>24</sup> Kevin J. Shanahan, and Michael R. Hyman, “The Development of a Virtue Ethics Scale,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 42, no. 2 (Jan., 2003): 197-208.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Crisp, Review of “Uneasy Virtue” by Julia Driver, *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research* 69, no. 1 (Jul., 2004): 239.

But it is not clear to me that this is the appropriate characterization of humility. Some philosophers see humility as a way of avoiding the vice of arrogance.

Another problem for humility is lurking within Hurka's characterization. Though a tremendous effort in giving humility its due, the theory suffers from an internal conflict that prevents it from successfully arguing for humility's value based on the commitments that Hurka has laid out in his theory.

In this paper, I will argue that humility should be recognized as a positive skill of thought and action for consequentialism. First I will present Thomas Hurka's view of humility, and then point out problems in his theory of humility in consequentialism. After that I will provide a positive account using Norvin Richards' theory of humility. As a result, I present a positive account of humility that restores its proper value, and accurately characterizes it. Humility is a finely-tuned skill that mentors may utilize towards beginners or those not as accomplished as themselves. Humility is not simply an occurrent attitude where one's heart runs away with one's head, but rather a skill requiring accurate beliefs, and is an approach to novices utilized with great insight, understanding, and compassion. Lastly, I will show how this account could be consistent with Hurka's overall theory by promoting the base-level goods in his theory. .

#### Hurka's Account and Conflict

In this section I will present Hurka's view of humility as well as point out two problems with it. Philosophers have attempted to talk about humility as a positive trait, attitude, or action inside consequentialism. Hurka's account involves two parts: how one's attitudes respond to one's own accomplishments and how they respond to the accomplishments of others. Addressing both of these is necessary to capture the idea of what humility means for Hurka.

Hurka's view of virtue consequentialism accepts humility as a virtue. His theory is given very detailed treatment in his book *Virtue, Vice and Value*. Hurka's brand of consequentialism is comprised of two components that function in a recursive relationship. A list of primary goods that are given intrinsic value: knowledge, pleasure, and achievement,<sup>26</sup> and a secondary layer of goods in the form of attitudes. Any positive attitude toward one of the intrinsic goods is considered a virtue, and any negative attitude towards these goods counts as a vice.<sup>27</sup> Concerning these attitudes, they can be either self-regarding or other-regarding, meaning that we can have a positive attitude towards ourselves as we achieve goods, or have positive attitudes towards others who are accomplishing their own achievements.<sup>28</sup> Hurka endorses that the person who hears about a heroic rescue by a local fireman, and genuinely feels happiness about his heroism is exemplifying virtue. Because the attitude is connected to the goods, the attitudes themselves are valuable.

Hurka's account also endorses agent-neutrality; accepting that each person's goods of the same level are no better or worse than any others.<sup>29</sup> Hurka requires that we not be selfish, but rather that we focus outside ourselves on the goods and attitudes of others in being virtuous as well. If two people have equal goods, then each of them should love their own as much and no more than they love the other person's good. In this way, a focus outside the self is required by Hurka's account. He also spends considerable time discussing the right intensity of attitude that we should have towards goods. The more time spent on an achievement, or the greater the degree of difficulty required to achieve it means that I should have a higher intensity of positivity towards it. I should be happy when my niece gets a perfect score on her spelling test, but I should

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice and Value* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001), 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 56.



be more pleased and happy when she passes the eighth grade. The greater the good the greater the intensity of the positive attitude. So if I land an excellent job at the same time that my best friend does, then we both deserve to be happy in equal measure for ourselves and each other.

Hurka sees humility as valuable as a virtue, and addresses it in several different passages in *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. One must perform a reconciliation of different passages of the text in order to ascertain Hurka's account of humility's value. Three key passages are cited below, and the assumption in discussing all three is that Hurka desires to maintain all of them as supporting evidence that humility is a virtue.

First, Hurka defines humility as a state where a person either sees her own accomplishments as having a lesser value than the equal goods of others, or she sees her own accurately but inflates the equal value of others to a greater value than they actually merit.<sup>30</sup>

This attitude can be one of several. A person can be so dedicated to improving herself that she notices only her failings and ignores her successes; she can be blindly charitable and, while accurately estimating her own achievements, systematically overrate those of others; she can believe that excessive pride is a temptation and to avoid it can intentionally direct her attention away from herself; or she can dislike inequalities in achievement and the distress they cause the less accomplished, and from that dislike again avoid noticing her merits.<sup>31</sup>

In each of these cases listed, the virtuous person has correctly responded to goods present and is therefore virtuous by his definition, but is only humble, according to Hurka, when committing some kind of cognitive failure to recognize her value or the value of others appropriately, or an inaccurate valuing of one's own goods. The recognition of goods must be lopsided in order to reflect a humble attitude. In each of these cases there must be a lowering of self or inflation of others in order to meet Hurka's standard. It is this lopsidedness that characterizes humility for him. People either make a cognitive error in their assessments of goods, or they end up putting

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 111.

their own goods down in order to see the goods of others as better than they are. This asymmetry is necessary for Hurka's humility, otherwise we simply have a straightforward virtue on his account. It is the asymmetry in goods recognition that allows for the penitence characteristic of humility.

Second, Hurka discusses the intuition that someone who has the correct proportion of attitudes towards goods is virtuous on his account, but "directing all one's love at goods outside the self seems no less good than reserving a portion for one's virtue."<sup>32</sup> In this section, Hurka attempts to show that a person can deny her own good in favor of focusing on the goods of others and still be virtuous. Hurka emphasizes that one must be indifferent to one's own good in the right way, otherwise she is vicious.<sup>33</sup> Hurka argues that one can only be indifferent to one's own good while focusing on the good of others if that focus does not entail a lack of self-respect for the person who is indifferent to her own good. For example, she must choose to ignore her own good, but recognize that her good has value to others and would also to her if she chose to value it. A person who lacks self-respect would not recognize the value of her own achievements in focusing on the value of others, and so would not be humble.

Third, in Hurka's discussion of the varieties of virtue he discusses a virtue like benevolence, when a person "desires, pursues, and takes pleasure in other people's good,"<sup>34</sup> as a simple virtue. "The simple virtues involve a single attitude that is appropriately oriented to its object and above the threshold intensity."<sup>35</sup> Hurka makes a distinction between simple virtues and virtues of proportion. Virtues of proportion are those in which the distribution of attitudes is appropriate to the value of different goods presented. A benevolent person possesses a simple

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 105.

virtue for Hurka, whereas a humble person possesses a virtue of proportion. A benevolent person is virtuous because she has the right attitude towards the goods of others even if she neglects recognizing some of her own value. That lopsidedness does not uphold the standard of valuing equal goods equally, and Hurka characterizes this as a shortfall in virtue or a minor vice, but still recognizes that the benevolence itself in isolation can be recognized as good. “His benevolence, considered by itself, remains a virtue, though one he possesses to a fault. On its own it is good, and it is on their own that simple virtues are understood.”<sup>36</sup> I have mentioned this passage as relevant to the virtue of humility because the attitude of the benevolent person looks relevantly similar to the lopsided attitudes of the humble person in the first quote. To reiterate, Hurka thinks someone who is upset by those who struggle to achieve may choose to avoid her own accomplishments in order to focus on those of others. In this way benevolence seems to be similar to humility. However, whereas the lopsidedness mentioned in the case of the person ignoring her own good is seen as a shortfall of virtue in the case of benevolence it is seen as acceptably virtuous in the case of humility. This difference is highlighted because it shows two similar ways of ignoring one’s own good, but Hurka assigns one the status of virtue, and the other a shortfall in virtue. This seems to be a contradiction in how these similar cases are treated in his theory. Benevolence for Hurka is a simple virtue, whereas humility is a virtue of proportion. Humility as a virtue of proportion is one where the attitudes of the virtuous are aligned appropriately toward goods according to their degree of goodness including some kind of penitence on the part of the humble.<sup>37</sup>

A brief summary of Hurka’s virtue of humility seems in order right here since there seem to be so many separate mentions of it. One can be humble by failing to recognize one’s own

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 110.

accomplishments, by focusing outside one's own accomplishments provided it's not out of disrespect for oneself, or if one has some underlying preoccupation with the care or concern of another instead of oneself while setting aside one's own goods.

While this account recognizes humility as a virtue there are two problems with Hurka's discussion of humility. In the first passage cited, Hurka describes a virtuous person who is only humble because she has a cognitive failure in recognizing her own self-worth or the worth of others, or she is lowering the value of her own goods by ignoring them. Humility, for Hurka, is a virtue because one has a particular false belief about one's own merits or has made a mistake in inflating the merits of others. Hurka's account appears to have fallen below the mark in capturing what is important and valuable about humility by using this as the evidence for why humility is a virtue. It is only when someone commits a mental error, or is ignoring her own good that she is humble. To be virtuous for Hurka is to properly assess a good; to be humble is to properly assess a good and then make a cognitive mistake or inaccurate value of another good. To praise someone else for the same accomplishment that I myself have earned in equal measure is a virtue for Hurka, but humility seems to be special in that it appears to need a lopsided recognition of value in order to be present. In order to account for this lopsidedness Hurka acknowledges that there is some mental mistake that is occurring, or in the case of the person ignoring her own good some kind of weakness of character that must be overcome in order to focus on the good. It seems to me that this is a problem because it is possible to be humble without having to make an error about one's own accomplishments, or be suffering from a weak will. Humility seems like a quality reflecting wisdom and enlightenment, not mental clumsiness. Because this problem concerns getting the nature of humility correct I will refer to it as the Nature Problem in the rest of the paper. Hurka's account of humility just does not accurately capture humility's true nature.

The second problem which seems to be the one causing most of Hurka's troubles is a direct conflict between his definition of virtue and his account of humility. Returning to his original definition of a virtue, equal achievements deserve equal praise. Hurka seems then to disregard this rule in order to be able to accept humility as a virtue. This simply won't work because of Hurka's acceptance of the equal achievement/equal praise constraint built into his theory. The idea of someone praising her friend's fantastic new job offer, and yet not being willing to accept any praise herself even though her achievement is equally deserving, is difficult to explain for Hurka because of that original definition he gives of virtue inside his account of consequentialism. It is no wonder that he must play out his intuition that humility is important in such strange ways as making cognitive errors or accommodating weaknesses of character. For the rest of the paper I will refer to this difficulty as the Conflict Problem. Hurka has a direct conflict between his accounts of virtue. Virtue by Hurka's definition is positive orientations towards goods in the appropriate degree, but humility by definition is a virtue where one must have an unequal recognition of goods. These two accounts conflict. In what follows I will argue for an account of humility that is much better than what Hurka has suggested, and that is also able to be supported by his own theory with a few minor changes.

#### A Positive Account of Humility

In this section I will argue for a new account of humility that I take to be the best one, and one that accurately captures what is valuable about it, and doesn't require any cognitive errors or downgrading of self. I will then show how this account will solve the Conflict and Nature Problems, and can be made consistent with Hurka's theory with just a few alterations. Norvin Richards is discussed because his view of humility moves in the right direction in

characterizing humility accurately. Nicolas Bommarito is also discussed as having made a valuable contribution to understanding modesty that can be applied to my own account.

Norvin Richards argues against the idea that humility is having low self-regard, and that humility should instead be seen as an accurate view of one's accomplishments and an avoidance of having an overestimation of one's self. "Humility... involves having an accurate sense of oneself, sufficiently firm to resist pressures toward incorrect revisions. Only, here the pressures are to think *too much* of one's self, rather than too little."<sup>38</sup> Richards interprets humility to be an accurate perception of what acclaim is due for one's achievements, and avoiding any temptation of asking for anything over and above that. It's acceptable to ask for praise upon summitting Mount Everest, but we should not gloat and ask for continuous laud when the time has clearly passed, and we have been praised enough. This account departs from commonsense accounts of humility. It seems odd that a trait so associated with penitence and low self-regard would be recast as honesty and accepting one's due. Part of what leads Richards to this account of humility is the idea that it is indeed an admirable trait, and it is hard to praise someone who has low self-regard instead of feeling sorry for them. This account of accuracy avoids the idea of low self-esteem somehow being seen as admirable by pointing out how important it is to resist temptations like asking for more praise than one is owed. Richards devotes an entire book to fleshing out his account of humility, and in it the values that he sees in viewing humility this way include: honesty in asking for one's due, a clarity of moral vision, and a spirit of forgiveness.<sup>39</sup> Richards believes that the humble person will have a better sense of the worth of others' achievements if he has an accurate view of his own. In this way recasting humility as a kind of accuracy and honesty allows someone greater power at weighing and understanding the values of

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<sup>38</sup> Norvin Richards, "Is Humility A Virtue?," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (Jul., 1988): 254.

<sup>39</sup> Norvin Richards, *Humility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 17.

others' achievements. If someone has a low opinion of himself, then he won't be in a good position to accurately respond to the goods of others because he may not be able to recognize their worth. Lastly, Richards sees the kind of moral accuracy of humility as fostering a spirit of forgiveness. Because the humble are resisting the urge to ask for more than is their due in terms of praise, they have a great understanding of how hard it is to resist that temptation. Thus, when they see someone unable to resist the urge to boast, or continually bring up an old victory they are more understanding because they themselves know how hard it is to withstand that urge.

It might seem a little jarring to think of humility as having an accurate sense of one's accomplishments, and not asking for more than is due in terms of praise, but I believe this is a valuable contribution to the humility dialogue. To further develop my account of humility I present an example of someone who has an accurate sense of his own expertise, but is still humble. When we imagine taking our car in to be fixed we take it to professional mechanics who are the experts when it comes to car repair. We only know that something is wrong, but not much more than that. When describing what is wrong with our car the mechanic we speak with could address us in several ways. He could prattle off a long list of possible troubles, including many technical terms we don't understand, and then ask us which solution we want to try first, all the while boasting about how much he knows and how much we don't know. Alternatively, he could straightforwardly present options to us without boasting, but also losing us in the technical jargon that we don't understand. Lastly, he could start presenting options in layman's terms, including explanations when we look a bit confused, and then being jovial with us in his suggestions. He uses phrases like, "Well, what I'd do is X," or "We can start with the easiest option if you want." He knows what is best for the car, but talks to us in such a way that we feel catered to, and considered in a special way. I would say that in the first instance our mechanic

can be classified as being vicious and arrogant. The second approach can be classified as being straightforward. It is the third approach that I think characterizes humility. It starts from an accurate view of how much each person in the exchange knows about the subject, and then shows the expert trying to meet the novice where he is. This is different from merely being straightforward. There is an effort here to make the novice feel included in the conversation, and not to make him shut down out of confusion and frustration. Humility involves having an accurate view of everyone's knowledge in an exchange, but also involves acting in a particular way towards another person who is not on par with the expert. An effort is made to meet the person where they are even though they know less than the expert.

Another example shows how this picture can be not only a virtue of thought and action, but transpire over the course of a full career.

A professor emeritus is having dinner with a group of graduate and undergraduate students where he has been invited as a keynote speaker for a conference. Seeing that these young students are a bit cowed by his reputation he gently asks about their own projects and interests. In learning a bit about each of them he attempts to meet them on their own level; he praises an undergraduate for having a 4.0 gpa. He listens carefully to a graduate student's dissertation proposal, and instead of pointing out blatant errors in the description he raises concerns in a friendly, engaging way. The students aren't really able to grasp the enormity of how much he himself has accomplished in his career, so they don't bring up his own writings. He in turn doesn't mention them either. The students leave the dinner with the feeling that the professor is pretty down-to-earth, and they enjoyed his company. He didn't talk down to them, or blast any of their ideas. The host is also left with the feeling that this professor is quite skilled in making students feel comfortable, as well as boosting their confidence, and maybe even inspiring them in their work by making them feel respected and important. He thinks he may even employ some of these attitudes himself when interacting with students. The next day at the conference the host notices that the professor approaches everyone with this same attitude. He meets students on their level, makes them feel like valuable contributors even if they are in the early, naïve stages of their projects, as well as downplaying or modestly accepting any praise that he gets concerning his own accomplishments. When asked why he approaches students in this way, he replies that he remembers being a student, and how difficult it was to battle procrastination or feelings of worthlessness in comparison with the accomplished faculty in his department. He takes to heart that treating students like their projects are more important than his own makes them feel like they matter, and he can attest that his students are able to avoid burnout, procrastination, and other problems with



the help of his encouragement and attitude towards them. He even gets letters and emails communicating gratitude towards him for his humble approach in teaching. His students report how they recognize that they were given more attention and care than their projects deserved at that point in their careers, and they are now so grateful that he gave them such grace. Biblically, grace is referred to as a state of being where one is given an undeserved reward. These students report that they were in a state of grace because of his kindness and humble attitude towards them. Not only did it help them succeed, but they are able to look back in understanding and value that attitude towards teaching, employing it in their own careers.

The professor has an accurate view of everyone's accomplishments, but he attempts to meet the students where they are, and address them as though their accomplishments are as great as his own. In essence he tries to disregard his perspective as an accomplished mentor, and instead see the students' achievements as a less-accomplished peer would see them. The professor is humble. He has an accurate view of everyone's merits, but he chooses to approach the students as deserving of a high level of praise as his own achievements. A student who has been accepted to an undergraduate conference should be praised as though the mentor had been accepted to speak at the East Coast APA Conference. The mentor resists treating the undergraduate conference as paltry compared to the APA conference, and treats the lesser conference as just as important as the APA. The virtue of humility in this case is not simply a one-time interaction, but encompasses a rich approach to being a mentor over the course of a life.

So far my position defends humility as a virtue that involves both thought and action, and may be seen over the course of a lifetime. There is one additional feature that is important for humility that hasn't been addressed yet. It concerns one's attention. Nicolas Bommarito posits that modesty, which seems very similar to my description of humility, involves one's attention being directed away from one's self.

Modesty is also a virtue of attention, though in a somewhat unique way. A commonsense way to understand what it is to be modest about something is to not make a big deal about

it, down play it, or ignore it. We ignore things by directing our attention *away* from them. In this sense, modesty is often a virtue of *inattention*.<sup>40</sup>

Bommarito thinks that this inattention to, or directing away from one's self is valuable when it is done for the right reason. The practice of inattention must be the result of good values and desires.<sup>41</sup> In Bommarito's examples someone who displays modesty while lacking bad desires or concerns is praiseworthy. One example he gives is of a skilled driver who never brings up his own great driving skills.<sup>42</sup> The driver lacks an urge to boast, or dwell on his skill, both of which are bad desires.<sup>43</sup>

Ann Bradshaw shares this commitment to inattention in describing the value of humility in the field of medicine. She believes that humility is an important value and practice for modern-day nurses.<sup>44</sup> She sees humility as a self-sacrificial act, putting the needs of others before one's own. In being a good nurse one must care for, "...people who are strangers, and who may seem at times unappreciative, unattractive, difficult and even dangerous."<sup>45</sup> It takes humility to be able to continuously care for these patients. Nurses realize that they also have needs and worries in their own lives, but those are set aside in order to cater to those who need their care and expertise. Certainly people who affront us by being rude or disrespectful don't deserve to be met on equal footing, but to be a good nurse for Bradshaw means seeing their needs as primary, and meeting those needs with care even in the face of such disrespect. Nurses not only provide

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<sup>40</sup> Nicolas Bommarito, "Modesty as a Virtue of Attention," *Philosophical Review* 122, no. 1, (2013): 100.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>43</sup> In the first quoted passage of Hurka's description of humility he describes someone who directs attention away from herself in order to avoid pride, or someone who directs attention away from herself because she is so bothered by inequalities of achievement. It really seems as though Hurka has in mind Bommarito's picture of inattention. However, it doesn't appear that Hurka's examples would be examples of humility because they are not acting from compassionate motives towards others, but rather trying to make up for failings in their own characters. It is still worthy of note, that these cases seem different than those where individuals are simply making cognitive errors.

<sup>44</sup> Bradshaw, "The Virtue of Nursing," 479.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

care for patients who seem unattractive, but they are attentive to their complaints and feelings. In this way the nurse also has his own stresses and complaints, but sets these aside in order to cater to his patients. By emphasizing their needs, and setting aside his own completely he expresses humility.

This idea of inattention is important in describing humility. In the case of the professor emeritus above, he is inattentive to his own great deeds, and instead places the focus on the students and junior faculty. We can assume he is doing this from desires such as: wanting the students to feel welcome in talking with him, not wanting them to be discouraged or frustrated, wanting to promote their confidence, and wanting to promote their future success. He does this out of compassionate motives towards others who are not as far along in their achievements as he is. Humility has at its root a set of desires for the good of others. Those who display humility are doing so with the others best interest in mind.

This component of humility that is rooted in good desires also gives us a picture of what false humility turns out to be. False humility would be someone going through the same actions with the same accuracy of recognition, but with bad desires at heart. If a professor mimics the professor emeritus because he thinks it will gain him accolade the same way it does the actually humble professor, then we can see that he is expressing false humility. Genuine humility must come from good desires for the welfare of others in addition to being a virtue of both action and thought.

Combining all of the different components of my account together, humility is a skill developed from the desire to better others who are at a lower-level of expertise than one's self. It involves having a keen eye not only to where everyone in a group stands in terms of expertise,

but also a well-developed method for successfully making others feel encouraged. Humility in this sense is now laudable as a praiseworthy skill in thought and action.

#### The Positive Account and Hurka

My positive account of humility takes issue with Hurka's definition of humility, but he could respond that this picture of humility is consistent with his overall theory. First I will show how my account of humility could solve both of the problems that face Hurka's theory, then I will show how he could respond that my account of humility fits into his own theory. Overall I will show that I have argued for a better version of humility than Hurka presents, but that I haven't produced a version of humility that is inconsistent with his own overall consequentialist theory.

The Conflict Problem describes a conflict of ideas in understanding the concept of virtue. Virtue, for Hurka, requires a response of equal joy at equal achievements, but humility requires a lopsided recognition of goods. The best way to resolve such a conflict would be to take one side or the other. By applying my idea of humility to Hurka's theory we end up seeing that he can maintain the basic definition of virtue, and not have to skirt any kind of balance of attitudes to capture humility; it now fits the basic definition of virtue itself. My account allows humility to respect his original definition of virtue by merely pushing attention away from one's own merits without ending up with a lopsided, inaccurate account of merit.

This recasting of humility solves the Nature Problem as well. The Nature Problem points out that the humble making a cognitive error, or having a weak character just doesn't sound praiseworthy. It sounds strange, for example, to praise someone for making a mistake and thereby being humble. It seems like the humble person is not quaintly naïve of his own value or accomplishments, but rather that he knows what he is doing when he is acting humbly. To

identify this attitude as someone making a cognitive mistake just misses the point that humility is a laudable skill. By adopting my view of humility the humble person has an accurate view of accomplishments, but is still able to express the markers of humility such as penitence in his actions. The professor, an exemplar in teaching and mentoring, truly expresses what it means to be humble. When we sit down and think about the professor, we don't see him making cognitive mistakes; he knows his achievements are greater than the students' achievements, but he acts this way because he sees that it has great consequences in their lives. This account gets the nature of humility correct, and solves the Nature Problem for Hurka.

So far I've shown that my view of humility solves the two problems presented earlier. Of equal importance is showing that my account could be supported by Hurka's position with a few adjustments to his theory. Hurka's consequentialism recognizes three intrinsic goods: knowledge, pleasure, and achievement. These goods are the ones that should be promoted. In order for this idea of humility to be seen as good it must promote one or more of these goods. The example points to several positive outcomes that would potentially stem from the professor's actions. One of the positive outcomes of talking to students 'on their level' is that it allows them to keep their morale up. They don't feel like they are being talked down to, or made to feel inferior to the professor. He is someone they can talk to because they know he won't condescend to them, and so they are able to get feedback on their own projects without feeling downcast. They won't go home and brood the way they would if someone in the professor's position had pointed out that their ideas were naïve and pedestrian. They might even be able to recognize that what he is doing is not an obligation; that it is a gift to be approached on equal terms. It looks as though the students have a lot to gain in terms of positive outcomes from the professor's attitude. The professor's colleagues have much to gain from his actions as well. He

sets an example of penitence and patience to those at the conference. This fosters a sense of belonging in those present, and may even inspire other instructors to be more humble in their own presentations. This approach adopted by these instructors will serve as encouragement for their students and junior colleagues the same way that it does in the mentor's own life. Students approached with humility instead of condescension are more likely to invest themselves in a course. They can sense when their instructors are being sensitive towards them, and this serves to bolster their interest, whereas an instructor that accurately assesses students' ideas and contributions as lesser than his own will likely discourage his students from investing themselves in their success in the course. Humility in the instructor contributes to the promotion of knowledge and achievement in the students. It is also quite likely that an instructor who is insightful of her feedback to her students will also promote the enjoyment of her course to her students.

There is evidence to suggest that those who possess humility also experience positive consequences themselves as a result. Richards likens humility to dignity in that both require a strength of character that allows its possessor not to be easily perturbed or frustrated.<sup>46</sup> This denotes a strength of character that shows great self-control on behalf of the person who expresses humility. It takes patience to defer to others and be open to their ideas even when we see the obvious weaknesses that they themselves don't. This strength of character can easily be seen to be beneficial to those who are humble. It contributes to other beneficial qualities such as fortitude. Fortitude in turn helps stabilize other virtues such as courage. This fortitude allows its possessors to remain calm and collected in the face of stressful, difficult situations. Not only does this allow the humble to have a certain peace of mind and detached nature that allows them

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<sup>46</sup> Richards, "Is Humility a Virtue," 258.

to keep their cool when others would simply react, but others are quick to notice this strength as well. A doctor who continues to calmly tend to his patients even if on the battlefield is viewed with awe over his self-control. So possessing humility will require a certain fortitude and self-control that allow its possessor peace of mind as well as a high reputation. The presence of humility indicates the presence of other valuable traits. In the case above the fortitude that supports humility can also support other virtues such as courage.

The humble also benefit from a heightened sense of gratitude. Because they understand the mechanics of being humble they are able to recognize it in others. Being humble is an advanced skill that shows someone is able to tune in to others and talk to them on their level. This takes patience and compassion in those who offer it to others. The humble can recognize this in others because they themselves are so familiar with its workings. They understand that it is a gift that is extended to others though it is not deserved or earned. When the humble recognize humility being extended to others they can have a positive reaction in recognizing it. It's a concrete example of compassion and patience being offered, and it evokes gratitude in those who can recognize that it is being proffered.

These are just a few of the straightforward ways in which this account of humility does in fact meet Hurka's standard of good action. My version of humility can be seen to promote the base-level goods in many different ways.

The one lingering difficulty for Hurka would be that my version of humility does not fit his definition of a virtue. Humility on my account is not an occurrent attitude, but rather a skill. Hurka's view simply does not accommodate this kind of skill as a virtue based on the framework that he has so painstakingly provided us. This shows a flaw in his theory because my view of

humility is a valuable characteristic for a person to have, and his theory does not endorse it as a virtue.

At this point it might be valuable to examine whether humility has limitations. Is it always good teaching tool to approach a novice with special consideration? Humility's value is dependent upon it producing positive consequences. When these positive consequences are no longer present, humility ceases to be valuable. For example, a wily student may talk to the professor emeritus as an equal, seeing the professor's feedback as on par with his own ideas. In this case the student does not actually get any mentoring help from the professor, but instead continues to banter while getting nothing out of the conversation. In cases like these the humility might help the professor build greater stamina in his practice of patience, but the student loses in the bargain. When approaching students with humility actually hobbles them in learning, then it ceases to be valuable, and should be abandoned. In the same vein, if a young female instructor approaches her class with humility only to find herself overrun by students who perceive her as unskilled, then humility will actually prevent the students from learning from her. Humility is not an action that is universally beneficial. Sometimes when it is proffered it does not produce positive consequences. When that is the case it should be abandoned.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have presented my own view of humility, and argued for its superiority over Hurka's account of humility. I have also shown that though my account will not fit Hurka's definition of virtue, it does fit into his theory insofar as it promotes the primary goods. I have argued for an account of humility that is not only superior to that of Hurka's, but one that could even be endorsed as valuable by someone sceptical of humility's value. Those who dismiss humility's value because it entails a low estimation of self or low self-esteem could see the value



of this version of humility that I have provided. Humility has an important place not only in virtue ethics, but also in ethics overall. The humble deserve to have their humility understood and praised. I have attempted to elucidate some of the inner workings of humility in order to bring to light a new perspective that has not been discussed in the philosophical literature of humility. My view advocates a view of humility that shows it to be a valuable quality in a person, and goes further in attempting to accurately capture its workings within a person. This project serves as a way to quell the dissent about humility, advocates its value in a robust way, and paves the way for greater conversations about the virtues.

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## **Intrinsic Value in Virtue Consequentialism**

Philosophers have recently made great headway in establishing virtue theories inside consequentialism; Julia Driver and Thomas Hurka are two such philosophers. Both theories mark out new territory for consequentialism, but neither succeeds in offering a feasible alternative to contemporary virtue ethics because intrinsic value is lost in both cases. Of the two positions, Hurka's is stronger than Driver's. Intrinsic value for virtue in consequentialism is obviously a stronger, more stable position for consequentialists to take as opposed to instrumental value for virtue. However, if consequentialists want their versions of virtue to be acceptable alternatives to traditional virtue ethical theories, then they must have intrinsic value for virtue, and the right kind of intrinsic value for virtue. Hurka's theory of virtue may be stronger than Driver's, but it does not live up to the standard of virtue for virtue ethicists.

Traditional virtue ethics describes the good as being constituted in the virtues or explained in terms of the virtues. Christine Swanton explains that the good and the virtues exist together, and are not pulled apart into two separate categories, but the good is defined in terms of virtue.<sup>47</sup> Michael Slote echoes that these aretaic goods, or virtues, should be viewed as primary,<sup>48</sup> as opposed to derivatively, or riding on another set of values. When understanding the human good the idea of goodness is explained in terms of virtues for virtue ethicists. This view of virtue as constituting the good is one that most traditional virtue ethicists hold, and it is one that Thomas Hurka attempts to capture. In his attempt, he ends up characterizing virtue as part of a greater whole, or organic unity that makes virtue part of a derivative set of goods. This picture more closely resembles Christine Korsgaard's alternative to intrinsic value: extrinsic value.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Christine Swanton, "Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness, and Consequentialism," *Utilitas* 13, no. 2 (2001): 235.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (New York: Oxford, 1992), 89.

<sup>49</sup> Christine M. Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (1983).

This organic unity fails to meet the standard of intrinsic value that virtue ethicists require of virtue. It should not be accepted as a viable alternative to virtue ethics. A consequentialist account of virtue that defines it as intrinsic may still be possible, but consequentialists must be more careful in their description of virtue in order to provide an account that is acceptable by virtue ethical standards.

In this paper, I will show the failure of Hurka to capture the intrinsic value of virtue that would make his theory acceptable to virtue ethicists. I will do this by walking the reader through Hurka's theory, showing how it fits with Korsgaard's extrinsic value, and appealing to traditional virtue ethicists to show why Hurka's virtue does not live up to the virtue ethical standard. I will also compare Driver's and Hurka's virtue theories in order to show that Hurka's theory is indeed a strong consequentialist theory of virtue when compared to a theory that only characterizes virtue as instrumentally valuable even if it does not live up to the virtue ethical standard.

#### Driver: The Weaknesses of Instrumental Value

Julia Driver's account of virtue characterizes virtue as only instrumentally valuable. I discuss it to show that instrumental value is insufficient for an account of virtue. Driver's account of virtue consequentialism introduces an account of virtues as traits that are valuable for producing more good than bad in terms of consequences.<sup>50</sup> Virtues are the way of charting which traits yield positive outcomes. They are the tools of utility creation and maximization. Other accounts that esteem traits like integrity and honesty are only praiseworthy and good in Driver's account if they yield good results. Even if these traits do end up yielding good results they have lost their independent value. The traits that achieve good consequences are only the handmaidens to utility, and have little value outside the consequences that they produce. Any trait can be a

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<sup>50</sup>Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2001), 26.

virtue no matter if that trait once showed up on a list of vices in another account, and the virtues can change depending on the context.

The criticisms of Driver's position point out the importance of building an account of virtue that includes intrinsic value, and how an account with only instrumental value is too weak to adequately address virtue. This survey of criticisms is meant to point out how much stronger Hurka's theory is compared to Driver. The criticisms leveled against her theory due to the instrumental value of virtue fall into three categories: those that maintain that virtue must be a more stable category than Driver describes, those that point out the counterintuitive nature of virtue on this account, and those that maintain that virtues are the kind of thing that must be intrinsically valuable.

Ben Bradley is most concerned about the instability of virtue under Driver's account.<sup>51</sup> Because her traits can be virtues in some contexts but not in others, he sees her theory as describing virtue as an unstable concept.<sup>52</sup> The critique argues that virtue must remain stable over time and in different contexts if it is to be called a virtue. Bradley is concerned that virtues by their nature should not be the kind of thing that can simply disappear when one moves contexts or situations. This problem arises due to the nature of the account of virtue. If virtue were assigned intrinsic value, then the virtues wouldn't wobble from virtue to vice depending on context.

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<sup>51</sup> Ben Bradley, "Virtue Consequentialism," *Utilitas* 17, no. 3 (Nov., 2005).

<sup>52</sup> He endorses a supplement of counterfactualism in order to stabilize the virtues. His supplement entails looking at a trait in the actual world and also in counterfactual contexts and then making an overall assessment of the virtues. This account would minimize the instability of virtues and also affect context specificity. Traits would still be virtues in some contexts and not others, but with more counterfactual knowledge we would have a better idea of the virtues that survive being virtues outside the actual world.

Nafsika Athanassoulis is concerned with the counterintuitive list of virtues we have from Driver's theory.<sup>53</sup> Any trait that produces more good than not becomes a virtue, and this would usher in traits like neatness and politeness to the fold of virtue. These virtues seem counterintuitive compared to the traditional list including courage, friendship, generosity, and humility. Again, we see that virtue is the kind of thing that cannot be politeness or neatness. Todd Calder criticizes Driver on the count that her theory produces virtues that should be considered vices. He points out that aggressiveness and malice could be virtues in the right contexts, and benevolence a vice in the right context.<sup>54</sup> According to Calder, we have preconceived ideas about what should and should not be a virtue, and the addition of any trait that serves as a tool to produce good cannot be ushered in. It stretches the concept of virtue too far from its original meaning. In this case as well if virtues were granted intrinsic value, then the virtues could be chosen and solidified instead of expanding into traits that don't bear any resemblance to the traditional virtues.

Lastly, it has already been mentioned that there is a feeling that virtue must be a certain kind of thing with certain attributes as it makes the shift from virtue theories over to consequentialism: intrinsic value is one of these attributes. Calder endorses this view<sup>55</sup> as does Christine Swanton.<sup>56</sup> One of the main tenets of Driver's theory that is responsible for these above-listed critiques is her ascription of instrumental value to the virtues. Because they turn out to be whatever trait will produce good consequences rather than bad, they can be any trait at all, including those that we are ignorant of, regardless of how counterintuitive. I will now describe

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<sup>53</sup> Nafsika Athanassoulis, "Uneasy Virtue by Julia Driver," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 211 (Apr., 2003): 306.

<sup>54</sup> Todd Calder, "Against Consequentialist Theories of Virtue and Vice," *Utilitas* 19 no. 2 (2007): 206-207.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>56</sup> Swanton, "Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness," 215.

Thomas Hurka's view to show that though it solves these problems confronting Driver it still does not ascribe the right kind of value to virtue.

#### Hurka: An Account of Virtue

Thomas Hurka defends a version of virtue consequentialism that has its roots in philosophical frameworks such as those of: G.E. Moore, Franz Brentano, and W.D. Ross.<sup>57</sup> His theory of virtue is a departure from the Neo-Aristotelean version championed by philosophers such as Julia Annas. At the beginning of his most exploratory text on his new version of virtue, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, he paints the landscape of virtue as either Driver's instrumentally valuable version, or the traditional virtue theory's intrinsically valuable version. He hopes to carve out a middle ground though those two, and show that virtue inside consequentialism doesn't have to lose its status of intrinsic value.<sup>58</sup> Hurka displays great awareness of virtue theorists' commitment to virtue being a primary good, and having value outside of being just the instrument of happiness. He hopes that his account can also maintain this value even though he sees many consequentialists saying that it is impossible. I will first describe the theory, explain how it solves the problems confronting Driver, and then argue that his version of intrinsic value is inadequate at capturing the right kind of value for virtue.

To get a sense of Hurka's hierarchical theory of virtue consequentialism it is valuable to look at what is considered an intrinsic value and how virtue is related to those goods which have intrinsic value. Hurka begins his explanation of virtues by identifying a list of goods that have intrinsic value.<sup>59</sup> The list of goods given as intrinsically valuable is: knowledge, pleasure, and

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Hurka, "Vices as Higher-level Evils," *Utilitas* 13 no. 2 (2001): 195.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Hurka is careful to point out that he does not consider himself committed to these in any strong sense, but that they serve their purpose as filling out the content of the theory.

achievement.<sup>60</sup> Hurka, seeing the value that knowledge, pleasure, and achievement have, argues that any positive attitude towards these goods is also itself good. Hurka dubs these positive attitudes towards intrinsic values virtues, and inappropriately negative attitudes towards these values vices.<sup>61</sup> For example, if I hear that my friend has gotten a great job with her local government where she is excited to do a lot of positive things for her community, then I should be happy for her. Her getting the job is an achievement that took hard work and exemplifies Hurka's achievement value, and the positive changes that she will bring to her community are also achievements. The job will also provide her with knowledge of the best ways of bringing about effective change, as well as a lot of pleasure in the changes she sees made. These are all instances of the list of intrinsic goods being exemplified.

The virtues would be the positive orientations that both she and I have about these intrinsic values being supported. It is the mental orientation of our joy for her and her accomplishments that are the virtues for Hurka. They depend upon what is happening out in the world, and how we respond to the world. Our orientations towards goods and ills constitute virtues and vices. These attitudes depend upon goods and ills in such a way that they can be seen together as a hierarchy. Taking a closer look at the structure of Hurka's virtues reveals that on the lower level are the intrinsic goods, and on a higher level are these orientations. Hurka wants to say that both of these categories are intrinsically valuable. His account of these attitudes being intrinsically valuable involves their relation to the other intrinsic values listed above. He refers to the list of intrinsic values—knowledge, pleasure, and achievement—as base-level goods. To this he adds 'recursive clauses' describing how the attitudes are valuable as higher-order goods in

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice and Value* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001), 12.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



relation to the base-level goods that serve in order to show how he envisions this hierarchy. For my purposes, I will only refer to the first of those clauses.

The first of these clauses concerns the positive attitude of loving something good. It says that whenever something is intrinsically good, loving it for itself, that is desiring, pursuing, or taking pleasure in it for itself, is also intrinsically good. Thus, if person A's pleasure is intrinsically good, person B's benevolently desiring or pursuing A's pleasure as an end in itself is also intrinsically good...<sup>62</sup>

In short, to desire that someone succeed in getting a good job, or being pleased at your niece's winning the spelling bee is to display a virtue. It is a virtuous attitude to have because it is a positive orientation towards one of the other, base-level intrinsic goods. Virtues for Hurka are occurrent attitudes that are positive orientations towards the base-level goods. By giving these virtues intrinsic value, Hurka sees them as maintaining the same level of value as the base-level goods. "To say that virtue is intrinsically good, we can assume, is to give it the same status, whatever exactly that is, as any other good in a consequentialist theory."<sup>63</sup> This is quite a departure from the traditional Eudaimonistic idea of virtue. Though Hurka admits that character training is probably the best way of becoming virtuous on his account, he also supports the idea that someone could make a very good judgement and end up being virtuous without extensive formal training.<sup>64</sup>

[B]y applying the term 'virtue' to acts and feelings regardless of their connection to stable traits, the occurrent-state view find the primary value in these states considered on their own...the view will continue to emphasize such states by making their value independent of any connection to longer-lasting traits.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Hurka, "Vices as Higher-Level Evils," 196.

<sup>63</sup> Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Hurka, "Virtuous Act, Virtuous Dispositions," *Analysis* 66 no. 289 (2006): 73.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

If someone responds appropriately, then they are expressing a virtue even though this separates virtue from character traits expressed in traditional virtue ethics. This account is one that not many consequentialists have considered. Hurka himself states that most philosophers believe that this kind of account is impossible, so it is important to see how Hurka defends his account of virtue, and its intrinsic value.

Hurka accepts the importance of virtue keeping its intrinsic value, and then goes on to try to use a process of elimination to show that his occurrent attitudes are the only feasible way of keeping the desired intrinsic value using a process that shows the faults in other ways of making virtue intrinsically valuable for consequentialism.<sup>66</sup> Hurka begins by examining what may be the most intuitive way consequentialists can maintain intrinsic value for virtue, adding it to the list of intrinsic goods. For example, utilitarianism has pleasure/happiness as the one intrinsic value, while rule utilitarians try to keep both justice and pleasure as intrinsic goods. Virtue consequentialism along these lines would just delineate that virtue is the intrinsic good. The virtues would be the list of goods, perhaps the only goods or simply on the list among other goods, and the vices would constitute the list of evils. Any action that led to virtue would be a right action, and any action that led to vice would be a wrong action. In this way virtues would not ride on other goods, but would themselves be non-derivative intrinsic goods. Hurka argues that though this approach may seem intuitive and attractive it has several flaws that make it far less attractive than his own account. This account of virtue would describe virtue as that which promotes good and minimizes evil making it also instrumentally valuable. Hurka believes that virtue is an intentional orientation toward the good, but is not an instrument of bringing about or

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<sup>66</sup>Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, 7-11.

promoting the good.<sup>67</sup> It does not merely serve as a tool to increase other goods, it is valuable by itself. This gets around the problem of a value being both instrumentally valuable and intrinsically valuable in Hurka's account.

Now we can consider how Hurka's account can actually solve some of the difficulties of Driver's view because of that intrinsic value attributed to virtue to show the importance of that value in an account including virtue. Let us recall that the charges leveled against Driver's account include: being fundamentally unstable in its listing of virtues, producing a counterintuitive set of virtues, and being unable to capture the intrinsic value of virtue. I will address these each in turn.

Hurka's account is able to overcome the challenge facing Driver that her account produces a counterintuitive list of virtues. Hurka's unique framework of hierarchical values allows him to avoid this criticism. His list of virtues does not end up being counterintuitive because the occurrent attitudes are anchored to the base-level goods in such a way that attitudes of malice toward achievement will always be ruled out from becoming virtues. For Driver, if malice toward achievement produces more good than bad we must just accept that this is a virtue. Having control over the base-level goods allows Hurka to avoid any counterintuitive virtues because the virtues support those base-level goods, and aren't just free-floating attitudes that are virtues because of the good they promote. Hurka can also avoid the difficulty of adding

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<sup>67</sup> If virtues like generosity were added to the primary list of intrinsic values, then consequentialism dictates that right actions would promote these goods. Virtues become actions that maximize generosity, or result in states of affairs that show an increase in generosity from the previous status quo. The other primary intrinsic goods work this way as well. Because knowledge is a primary intrinsic value we should seek to act such that our actions result in an increase of knowledge from the previous status quo. We would end up valuing virtue not for its own sake, but rather for the good that it promotes, demoting it in value. Hurka argues that this would make virtue merely instrumentally valuable, and further maintains, with Sidgwick, that an instrumental good cannot also be an intrinsic good. Also, Hurka cites Sidgwick as finding a similar problem, saying that virtue has this kind of intrinsic value would lead to a 'logical circle' of promotion. Hurka's recursive account of virtue then stands out as the best one by showing how it avoids this problem of promotion, according to his reasoning. Because of the removal from base-level intrinsic goods, Hurka believes that his version of virtue is not connected with promotion.

virtues such as politeness and neatness to his list because these would not correspond as attitudes to the base-level goods. Based on the occurrent attitudes being anchored to the base-level goods, Hurka's list of virtues avoids being counterintuitive showing the importance of intrinsic value in capturing virtue's true nature.

Hurka's account can also avoid the stability problem facing Driver's account. The problem is that some traits that are virtues in one context become vices in other contexts. Driver is criticized for this because philosophers have an intuition that what is a virtue should stay a virtue, and certainly not become a vice in a different setting. Hurka's theory once again avoids this stability problem because of the virtues being anchored to the base-level goods. Being happy when my friend passes her dissertation defense remains a virtue across contexts. As we saw above because of the way that Hurka's virtues are connected to the base-level goods he can avoid the instability charge. What is a virtue should stay a virtue over different contexts because of the structure Hurka has set up, and its intrinsic value.

Lastly, Hurka is able to avoid the difficulty that Driver faces in having an account of virtue that ascribes only instrumental value to the virtues. As has already been shown he attributes intrinsic value to the virtues, and avoids this charge altogether. The attractions of a virtue consequentialist account that can capture intrinsic value are so dazzling that it is deserving to take stock of this attractive attribute before pointing out the weaknesses of Hurka's view. In his article, "Vices as Higher-Order Evils," Hurka discusses these attractions in reference to his account.

This account makes many plausible general claims about virtue. It captures the widespread view that the virtues are in some way desirable states, and does so by holding, more specifically, that they are intrinsically good... The account also successfully connects its general claims to more particular ones in the ways described at

the beginning of this paper, yielding plausible lists of individual virtues and vices and explaining what unites and distinguishes them.<sup>68</sup>

Todd Calder makes special mention of Hurka's theory in comparison with Driver's in pointing out that it can avoid the instability that Driver's theory faces because of its incorporation of intrinsic value.

Since Hurka's account characterizes virtue and vice in terms of the intrinsic properties of these character traits, it is conceptually impossible that changes to the instrumental, or consequential, properties of the virtues and vices could change virtues into vices or vice versa.<sup>69</sup>

Calder believes that it is the intrinsic nature of virtues that allows Hurka's theory to resist the instability that Driver faces. The intrinsic value of the virtues allows them to remain stable regardless of context. On the face of it Hurka's theory ascribing intrinsic value to virtue certainly looks very attractive.

Brian McElwee, in his article discussing Hurka's virtue consequentialism, is excited about the position, dubbing it the appropriate response view, and praises the intrinsic value of virtue considerably.

Appropriate and inappropriate responses to value are themselves very plausibly intrinsically good and intrinsically bad respectively. And so if virtue and vice consist in such responses, then virtue and vice are indeed respectively intrinsically good and intrinsically bad, just as common moral thought would have it.<sup>70</sup>

He also touts the attractiveness of such an account, pointing out that this account avoids the problems that face instrumentalist accounts, mainly, that they yield unintuitive lists of virtues and vices.<sup>71</sup> McElwee also points out that virtue seems intuitively to be more than just

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<sup>68</sup> Hurka, "Vices as Higher-level evils," 200.

<sup>69</sup> Calder, "Against Consequentialist Theories," 210.

<sup>70</sup> Brian McElwee, "The Value of the Virtues," *Utilitas* 27, no. 1 (2015): 66.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

instrumentally valuable, giving a nod to both Mill and Kant in pointing out how they each saw virtue as valuable.<sup>72</sup>

That Hurka's account of virtue is able to avoid the problems Driver faces shows the importance of ascribing intrinsic value to virtue. Consequentialists see the shortcomings of a purely instrumentalist view of virtue, and Hurka's view offers an alternative. But it seems that the attractiveness has caused some of these consequentialists to endorse Hurka's theory as accurately capturing intrinsic value a bit too soon. When examined, the framework inside this correct response view does not provide virtue with intrinsic value, but ends up being a form of extrinsic value. Hurka believes that by building a framework of virtues as 'intrinsically' valuable he has at once joined the ranks of the virtue theorists in ascribing the same level of value to virtue. However, when several of the definitions of intrinsic value are examined there is a disparity between the virtue ethicists' definition of intrinsic value and the consequentialists' definition. Because of this disparity, Hurka's account is not as successful in preserving the right kind of value as he would have us believe.

### Hurka's Organic Unities

In this section I will compare Hurka's intrinsic value to Christine Korsgaard's account of extrinsic value, as well as examine Hurka's idea of organic unity, ultimately showing that Hurka's idea of intrinsic value falls short of the virtue ethicists' ideals. In order to begin this critique of Hurka I will first examine Korsgaard's distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic value as a way of showing the discrepancy between Hurka's and virtue ethicists' accounts of intrinsic value.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 62.

Christine M. Korsgaard's, "Two Distinctions In Goodness," analyzes intrinsic goodness by distinguishing categories of value.<sup>73</sup> Korsgaard notes that many philosophers act as though there is one distinction to be made when discussing goodness in ethics. Philosophers use the phrase intrinsic value to mean that something is valuable in and of itself. They also use instrumental value to be the only other kind of value where something is valuable as a means to some end. The two phrases are seen as distinguishing two kinds of value in ethics. They are often perceived as exhaustive of the options for values of goods. If we apply this to the concept of virtue, we see that virtue is either intrinsically valuable or merely instrumentally valuable. If virtue is not intrinsically valuable, then it is in turn instrumentally valuable. These are seen as the only two options. Korsgaard points out that there are actually two distinctions being made in terms of goodness, and that this one distinction does not capture all of the different kinds of value.

There are, therefore, two distinctions in goodness. One is the distinction between things valued for their own sakes and things valued for the sake of something else—between ends and means, or final and instrumental goods. The other is the distinction between things which have their value in themselves and things which derive their value from some other source: intrinsically good things versus extrinsically good things.<sup>74</sup>

These two distinctions make room for two new categories that Korsgaard discusses. One of these new distinctions it makes room for is extrinsic value, which seems to be the missing option when philosophers move too quickly through explaining the value of certain goods. A good that displays extrinsic value is a good that derives its value from somewhere outside of itself. However, extrinsic value is a separate category from instrumental value. A good can be extrinsically valuable without necessarily being instrumentally valuable. To use Korsgaard's

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<sup>73</sup> Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions In Goodness," 170.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 170.

own characterization, some parts of an intrinsically valuable whole can themselves have extrinsic value in that they contribute to the whole, but are not themselves intrinsically valuable.<sup>75</sup> For example Korsgaard describes a person contemplating a beautiful painting as a whole picture as having intrinsic value. The person, contemplation, and the painting itself all contribute to the whole as having extrinsic value, but are not tools to promote the intrinsic value. She makes a distinction between contribution to a whole and utility production. She also quotes C.I. Lewis who has argued that the contemplation of an intrinsically valuable painting may itself be inherently valuable.<sup>76</sup> This inherent value is not itself intrinsic, but extrinsic.

So far, I have discussed the importance of an account ascribing intrinsic value to virtue because of the weaknesses a purely instrumental account faces. I would like to take a minute to explain why extrinsic non-instrumental value is also inadequate for describing the value of virtue. If we imagine a man who is generous, courageous, and patient we see that all of these virtues are part of his flourishing. If he is a great friend and accepts all of his civic duties, then he is a good citizen as well. His flourishing is defined in terms of his virtues and other goods. If we say that his patience is not valuable in and of itself, then virtue only has this value if it is part of a greater whole including everything else, and only chosen because it plays a role in contributing to his flourishing. His patience should be seen as valuable by itself, and chosen as valuable for its own sake, not for the role it plays in a larger picture. It should remain intrinsically valuable as it helps to constitute his flourishing, not because it draws its value from an outside source. Virtue constitutes his good.

When Hurka's characterization of intrinsic value is mapped onto Korsgaard's categories a gap opens up that has important implications for his view. Korsgaard's definition of intrinsic

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 172.



value defines it as something that is valuable by itself; the value it has resides in itself. For something to have intrinsic value is for that thing's value to rest in itself and not come from another source. Extrinsic value signifies that what is being valued draws its value from something outside of itself. The occurrent attitudes that Hurka values as intrinsically valuable draw their value from another source, mainly, the value of the list of base-level goods. My happiness for my friend who has gotten a great job is directed at the achievement itself, but it makes little sense to say that the happiness for my friend's achievement has value in itself when it is obvious that the happiness is only in response to the actual achievement. Without the achievement itself there would be no virtuous response toward it. The happiness for the achievement without the achievement doesn't make any sense. These virtues are orientations towards these other goods, but are parasitic on those other goods. They are good because what they are oriented toward is intrinsically good. If they were not parasitic on the other goods they would not be goods themselves. Despite the attractiveness of the view, these virtues are not yet intrinsically valuable unless their value stands alone instead of drawing it from another outside source. They match C.I. Lewis's example of inherent value. Because of their parasitic nature it cannot be the case that they are intrinsically valuable themselves. If proponents of Hurka's view want to maintain the intrinsic value of the virtues they must either attempt to change the nature of virtues such that they are no longer parasitic on other goods, or give an independent argument as to why this hierarchy maintains intrinsic value at all levels. Until either of these is attempted we simply have no good reason to accept that these virtues themselves have intrinsic value.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> It might be argued against this conclusion that the supposed base-level goods also have overlap, and that this overlap should not be significant enough to demote the value of the other intrinsic goods. For example, someone might point out that the pleasure of achieving a hard won success shows that that specific pleasure is parasitic on the achievement itself, but that does not mean that we can conclude that it should be demoted to extrinsic value as a result.

Hurka argues for the value of virtues to be part of an organic unity. However, as I will show, the attempt is also not successful at preserving the right kind of intrinsic value. In another work where Hurka argues for a particular interpretation of organic unities, we can ascertain that G.E. Moore's idea of organic unities first presented in *Principia Ethica* is consistent with Hurka's view of virtue as intrinsically valuable. Though not the purpose of the article, Hurka shows his position as consistent with Moore's concerning intrinsic value. It isn't that he has ignored or is unaware of Korsgaard's extrinsic category; he just believes that it's roughly the same as an account of intrinsic value as an organic unity. The article, entitled, "Two Kinds of Organic Unity," defends Hurka's view that whether one adheres to a strict view of intrinsic value in organic unities, or a more loose version, they both end up providing the same value, so they should be seen as equal unless there are special circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Hurka never directly addresses this interpretation of intrinsic value in *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, or "Vices as Higher-Order Evils," but those pieces offer precious little by way of support for intrinsic value in virtue in light of Korsgaard's distinction, so I believe that this explanation of intrinsic value can be applied to Hurka's virtue consequentialism as support for his view. This view of organic unities can be mapped onto his account of virtue consequentialism, and he has a consistent defense for his view. Again, I mention this as a possible way for Hurka to avoid the charge that his account prescribes only extrinsic value to his virtues instead of the intrinsic value that he wants.

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In response, it is not the overlap that I am concerned about; it is also not the fact that there exist some instances of base-level goods where one is parasitic on the other. I am concerned that the characterization of virtue in the appropriate response view is always parasitic on the base-level goods. A pleasure gained by accomplishing an achievement shows that there is occasional overlap between the base-level goods, but it does not mean that the two are parasitic on each other. Pleasure can be derived without any achievement necessary. The same exists for all of the base-level goods. The problem I am concerned about is that the nature of virtues as orientations towards other goods means that they are always derivative of some other good. They are always drawing their value from other goods. This makes them classifiable as extrinsic goods instead of intrinsic goods.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Hurka, "Two Kinds Of Organic Unity," *The Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998).

The argument that the article itself makes is a comparison of two different interpretations of organic unities, concluding that both end in the same value, and can be equivalent except in special cases. Both interpretations stem from G.E. Moore's original characterization of organic unity: "The value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts."<sup>79</sup> The first is described as a holistic organic unity. In this category, each of the parts assemble to become the whole maintain their value, but the value of the whole gains an additional value. One facet of this characterization that will be important later is that the intrinsic value of the parts of the whole each maintain their own intrinsic value regardless of the greater value of the whole. This fits with what is traditionally thought of as intrinsic value: a value in and of itself.

Hurka delineates another approach to organic unities that he calls the conditionality interpretation of intrinsic value. "It holds, against Moore, that the intrinsic value of a state can change when it enters into a larger whole, so its value or degree of value is altered by its relations to other states."<sup>80</sup> Under this view one part of a whole can have value when it enters into the whole, but lose that value when it is no longer part of it. In other words, the intrinsic value of a part in a whole can depend on the relation that it holds to another part of the whole. Hurka cites Moore's later example of contemplated beauty as an illustration of this conditionality view's credibility. Under the conditional view of intrinsic value, beauty by itself would have no intrinsic value, but once it is contemplated by someone, then there is value in the beauty itself because of the interaction among the parts of the organic unity. The contemplation, the beauty allowing for the contemplation, and the beauty itself now retain intrinsic value because of their configuration together. If pulled apart, the intrinsic value falls away from the beauty once again. In this way,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 303.

the beauty has conditional, intrinsic value.<sup>81</sup> Beauty gains intrinsic value from its relation to something else inside a greater whole. “Sometimes a state’s intrinsic value in the looser sense can depend on its relations to other states, or its place in larger wholes.”<sup>82</sup> Hurka finds this to be an acceptable alternative to Moore’s stricter view of organic unities. It is this conditionality view that Hurka commits Korsgaard to, and relabels what she herself calls extrinsic value as conditional intrinsic value within the organic unity. In this case extrinsic is just another name for conditional intrinsic value. He disputes her claim that intrinsic value must come from within the thing itself. Here intrinsic value can alter based on configurations of parts. Here’s why that is valuable: Hurka can maintain that intrinsic value can be conditional, which means he can justifiably describe virtue as intrinsically valuable even though it may only have conditional intrinsic value. The very fact that such an interpretation of organic unities exists shows that Hurka can dispute Korsgaard in saying that the value of virtue can be conditionally intrinsically valuable, not extrinsically valuable. It looks as though Hurka is justified in saying that virtue in his account is intrinsically valuable if he says that it is conditionally intrinsically valuable. Again, one valuable insight provided in this brief discussion of this article is that some kinds of intrinsic value are adequately categorized as intrinsically valuable even if their value still comes from somewhere outside of themselves. In the case of organic unities, the value comes from the proper combination of parts in a whole. Korsgaard is on one side of this discussion, and Hurka is on another. I do not wish here to resolve this dispute, but this article shows that Hurka has a response to Korsgaard and her category of extrinsic value. What has yet to be shown is that Hurka is justified in describing his hierarchical virtues as an organic unity. It is to this task that I turn next.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 303.

One good reason for characterizing Hurka's virtues as an organic unity comes later in the article. He discusses that though each of the different versions of organic unity provide the same overall amount of value, some of them fit better with others' theories than others. He specifically makes mention of his vices of disproportion, and argues that the holistic organic unity best fits with this part of his theory.<sup>83</sup> This discussion shows a direct link between the organic unities discussion, and his other works on virtue consequentialism. It is because of this link that I believe that he intends his virtue consequentialism to be a type of organic unity as well.

While his discussion of vices of disproportion makes sense given the structure of that configuration of attitudes and states, his virtues in consequentialism seem to fit better within the conditional version of the organic unity discussion. This is because the configuration of the virtues for his theory are attitudes towards certain base-level goods. If a virtue consists in being excited for a friend's promotion, then the configuration consists of the promotion, and my positive attitude toward it. If we pull those two pieces apart, and see them separately, we see that the promotion still retains its value, but the positive attitude does not. Removed of its end, the attitude becomes a free-floating entity. It is not directed at anything. A positive orientation doesn't make any sense without that which it is directed towards, in which case the orientation wouldn't retain its intrinsic value when removed from the holistic configuration. In this case the positive orientation towards some end comes into its value when it is part of the achievement itself. Therefore, the positive orientation changes its intrinsic value when it enters into the whole. This fits with the conditional version of organic unities more than the holistic version.

One may argue that it is possible to have free-floating attitudes that do not have a particular end at which they point. I might just feel happy, sad, excited, or anything, but not

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 308.

necessarily directed towards anything else. Alternatively, I may experience excitement about something that is about to happen. Wouldn't these states have intrinsic value outside of an attachment to ends that they are directed towards? I think the answer may be yes, but this won't help Hurka maintain that his virtues are part of holistic organic unities because these kinds of attitudes are simply not virtues. What makes an attitude a virtue is that it *is* directed at some end. These attitudes may have value, but they are not virtue. It still seems to be the case that Hurka's virtues fit under a conditional version of an organic unity.

#### Hurka's Departure from Traditional Virtue Theory

Now that some light has been shed on what kind of intrinsic value Hurka's virtue truly has, we can examine how this separates his theory from traditional virtue ethics. First let us return to the reason why intrinsic value was such a boon to the theory of virtue consequentialism in the first place. As stated above it is a general belief among professional philosophers that virtue just must be the kind of thing that is intrinsically valuable. Julia Driver certainly saw what criticism she came under from a virtue consequentialism that ascribed only instrumental value to virtue. Philosophers like Calder and McElwee praised Hurka's virtue consequentialism specifically because it was able to capture intrinsic value. Of all the changes that virtue has undergone in the past decades since its rise in popularity, retaining its intrinsic value from the traditional version of virtue theory is a commitment that will not be changed without heavy criticism. Philosophers like the intrinsic value of virtue for theories like virtue consequentialism because it is what has been acceptable for virtue since the first writings describing it. This is a commitment that I also share. It would appear that Hurka has kept in the good graces of the virtue ethicists by being able to maintain intrinsic value in his account, however, such is not the case. The previous discussion of organic unities and conditional intrinsic value shows why.

In much of the literature I have cited in this paper, philosophers are quite vague about what they specifically mean by intrinsic value. One may not agree with Christine Korsgaard's distinctions, but she raises a good point that the talk about intrinsic value is certainly lax in professional philosophy. I believe that this is also the case when it comes to the intrinsic value of virtue for Hurka. There is much praise about his theory having intrinsic value, but as was discussed above, if it can be correctly classified as intrinsically valuable, it is only within an organic unity that it displays this kind of value. Virtue has only conditional intrinsic value inside of an organic unity at best. At worst it doesn't even have intrinsic value at all, but rather an extrinsic value. This is highly problematic, though it wasn't apparent in the literature because most philosophers were using intrinsic value as a concept that had only one meaning. In this case the conditional intrinsic value of Hurka's virtue is problematic because it does not live up to the expectations of what is meant by intrinsic value by traditional virtue ethicists. A lot of the praise for Hurka's intrinsically valuable virtue in consequentialism results from its adherence to the traditional theories of virtue meant by intrinsic value, but traditional theories of virtue do not mean intrinsic value the way that Hurka uses the term.

Virtue ethics discusses the intrinsic value of virtue not in the sense of conditional value within an organic unity, but as valuable in and of itself. Traditional virtue ethics describes the good as being constituted in the virtues or explained in terms of the virtues. As Christine Swanton explains, "A virtue is a disposition of excellent (or good enough) responsiveness to, or acknowledgment of, items in the field(s) of that virtue."<sup>84</sup> Michael Slote echoes that these aretaic goods, or virtues in this case, should be viewed as primary.<sup>85</sup> When understanding the

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<sup>84</sup> Swanton, *Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness*, 215.

<sup>85</sup> Slote, *From Morality to Virtue*, 89.

human good the idea of goodness is explained in terms of virtues for virtue ethicists. Swanton goes on to explain that virtue ethics differs from consequentialism in its structure.

[V]irtue ethicists tend to deny that a robust list of non-aretaic values and disvalues can be given, values (and disvalues) to which virtues are responsive. Candidate values such as pleasure or friendship are, for them, not good without qualification, and others such as achievement are thought to have aretaic value built in.<sup>86</sup>

When virtues are seen as exemplifying these aretaic values there is no other base-level good that they are responding to, and this way of showing the ‘primacy’ of virtue also points out its intrinsic value. The virtues have value in and of themselves and constitute the good for people. This is why virtue ethicists are committed to the claim that the virtues are intrinsically valuable, because they simply are the good. Though Slote and Swanton both speak in general terms about virtue ethics a brief list of some of those committed to this kind of virtue theory are: Julia Annas, Phillipa Foot, and Christine Korsgaard, among many others. In contrast, Swanton points out how consequentialist theories see virtues as, “[U]nderstood derivatively as forms of responsiveness to, or as instrumental in the promotion of (or minimization of respectively), ‘base-level’ goods or evils, or intrinsic values or disvalues, understood non-aretaically.”<sup>87</sup> This hierarchy of goods removes virtue from being good for its own sake, and virtue becomes valuable in a derivative way.

Referring back to Korsgaard’s distinctions virtue theory intends virtue to have the meaning that fits the classification of intrinsic value as opposed to extrinsic value. As I have shown above, Hurka’s intrinsic value turns out to be consistent with Korsgaard’s extrinsic value, drawing its value from a source outside of itself making virtues derivative. Virtue theorists

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<sup>86</sup> Swanton, *Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness*, 215.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.



believe that virtue is valuable in and of itself, and that the value it has comes from itself, not somewhere outside of it. Hurka's theory is not a viable alternative to traditional virtue theories.

It is still possible for a consequentialist theory of virtue to live up to the correct standard of virtue ethics. Such a theory would have to eliminate the hierarchy of goods, and view virtue as primary. Hurka rejects this based on the claim that a virtue cannot both be instrumental as well as intrinsically valuable. If it is possible for a consequentialist to show that this dual value of virtue is not a problem, then a proper account of virtue could be built into a system of consequentialism. Such a melding of the two traditions could yield great explanatory power for both theories as well as bridge a rift between both theories. If consequentialists are to make this conception they must be very careful that they capture the correct kind of intrinsic value, and not another kind that describes the virtues as derivative or parasitic on an additional set of goods.

This paper surveys the landscape of Hurka's and Driver's virtue consequentialism showing how they stack up compared to other versions of virtue consequentialism as well as traditional virtue ethics. Hurka's view has many strengths that help it avoid the critiques that face other versions of virtue consequentialism such as Julia Driver's account. Ultimately, however, the account falls short on its account of intrinsic value. It cannot maintain the traditional intrinsic value that is expected in a virtue account.

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